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AUTHOR Cross, J. Logan; Hunter, Janice K.
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ABSTRACT

Studies in two consecutive school years examined the value of a counseling center in raising disruptive students' self-esteem, self-concept of academic ability, and internal locus of control. In 1982-83, profile data were compiled on 120 students who entered a school district's counseling center during that year. A treatment effectiveness study, involving 28 of these students, was conducted to ascertain treatment-related changes in the affective variables of interest. Pre- and post-treatment data were gathered using instruments designed to measure these variables. Student profile data were summarized and notable characteristics highlighted. For 1983-84, the same basic procedure was followed. However, the sample for both the profile and the treatment effectiveness study comprised 65 students; the counseling program was monitored to verify its conformity with stated procedures; and student profile data for the six schools with the most referrals to the center were assembled for comparison. As in the previous year, increases were observed in all three dependent variables. The difference between pre- and post-treatment means, for both the self-concept of academic ability and locus of control variables, was statistically significant. These and other findings provide evidence to support the counseling center approach to addressing affective needs of disruptive students. (Author/MCG)

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Examination of a Counseling Center Approach to Addressing Affective Needs of Disruptive Secondary School Students

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J. Logan Cross

Janice K. Hunter

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Abstract

The study examined a counseling center approach to providing for affective needs of disruptive students. The affective variables that served as focal points for the study were self-esteem, self-concept of academic ability, and locus of control. Student profile data were compiled on 120 students who entered the counseling center during the 1982-83 school year. A treatment effectiveness study, involving 28 of these students, was conducted to ascertain treatment-related changes in the affective variables of interest. Pre- and post-treatment data were gathered using instruments designed to measure the affective variables. Student profile data were summarized and notable characteristics highlighted. Comparison of pre- and post-treatment data revealed increases in self-esteem and self-concept of academic ability. An increase in internality of locus of control was also observed. The difference between the pre- and post-treatment means, for both the self-concept of academic ability and locus of control variables, was found to be satistically significant. The findings tend to provide evidence supporting the counseling center approach to addressing affective needs of disruptive students.

Introduction

Each year school districts are faced with problems relating to both suspension and expulsion of disruptive students. The Duval County Public School System, a large urban district of over 99,000 students, is not immune to this problem. In recognition of these problems, the school district has implemented a counseling center program to provide an alternative for students who are disruptive.

The Darnell-Cookman Counseling Center was established to provide individualized programs of instruction and counseling for its students. The Disruptive Program was designed to serve students who commit a major offense of the Code of Student Conduct, e.g., possession of drugs/alcohol, possession of weapons, assault. Students in the Disruptive Program are scheduled into Reading Improvement, Mathematic Skills Improvement, Study Skills, Physical Fitness and both individual and group counseling sessions.

Although the school district has offered educational alternatives in the past, the philosophy of the counseling center provides a new focus to the commitment to provide programming that addresses cognitive, psychomotor, and affective needs of students. To assist the counseling center's administration in ascertaining the effectiveness of the new program, the Division of Research, Planning and Evaluation developed an evaluation

plan. The objectives, established in conjunction with the Counseling Center's administration, were the following: 1.) to develop a profile of students enrolled in the Disruptive Program, and 2.) to conduct a pilot study to determine the effectiveness of the Counseling Center's program in changing student characteristics believed to underlie disruptive tendencies. Examination of demographic variables, self-esteem, self-concept of academic ability, and locus of control were included in the overall evaluation plan.

Presented in this paper is information relating to research conducted at the Counseling Center during the 1982-83 school year. The major focus of this paper, though, will be the presentation of the findings of research conducted during the 1983-84 school year.

Counseling Center Research 1982-83

The participants in the student profile research were 120 students who entered the Counseling Center during the 1982-83 school year. These students were referred to the Counseling Center following the commission of a major violation of the school system's Code of Student Conduct. The students were referred from 30 secondary schools distributed throughout the five regions of the school district.

The treatment effectiveness research included entry and exit data on 28 students who were selected at random. The instruments employed to measure the student self-esteem, self-concept of academic ability, and locus of control constructs were, respectively, the Self-Esteem Inventory--SEI--(Coopersmith,

1975), Self Concept of Academic Ability Scale-SCA-(Brookover, et.al., 1967), and Locus of Control Scale-LOC-(Nowicki and Strickland, 1972). These instruments were administered to the students upon enrollment in the Counseling Center. During their stay at the center, the students were exposed to counseling techniques designed to enhance their overall self-image. The ongoing counseling program was coupled with diagnostic-prescriptive instruction in the areas of reading and mathematics. Both the counseling and instructional components were structured and conducted in a fashion that required the students to assume responsibility for their decisions and actions. The average time of enrollment in the Counseling Center was six weeks.

The profile data revealed the majority of the disruptive students who enrolled in the Counseling Center were white males. The students were primarily in grades seven to nine (most likely between 12 and 15 years of age). With the exception of one junior high school located in an area predominantly populated by black, lower SES families, disruptive students were referred to the Counseling Center from schools located in areas predominantly populated by white, middle to upper SES families. Disruptive students were most frequently referred to the Counseling Center for drug-related violations. It was found that the majority (60%) of disruptive students did not reside with both of their natural parents.

Comparison of student responses to the SEI, SCA and LOC instruments to those of students in previous studies revealed that Counseling Center students had a lower self-esteem. It was

also found that there was no substantial difference between self-concept of academic ability among the disruptive students and students in previous studies. In regard to locus of control, the disruptive students appeared more externally controlled.

The directionality of entry and exit means for the SEI instrument reflected a positive change in self-esteem. The entry and exit means for the SCA scale revealed a statistically significant increase in self-concept of academic ability. The LOC scale revealed a statistically significant increase in internality of locus of control among the disruptive students.

The results of the study tended to support the effectiveness of the Counseling Center's approach to addressing student affective needs. Though the findings of this study did not provide solutions to the problems experienced by these students, they did provide information to be utilized in counseling these students. Likewise, the information was used to enhance the instructional efforts of the staff.

The limitations of the 1982-83 research had to do with errors in sampling and data collection. The sample included in the treatment effectiveness study was too small to permit extensive generalization of the findings. Furthermore, the validity and reliability of findings in the profile and treatment effectiveness studies were both compromised by the lack of comparison data from students not referred to the Counseling Center.

Counseling Center Research 1983-84

In light of the limitations of the previous research, the evaluation plan for the 1983-84 school year was refined to

include the following:

1). An increase in the number of disruptive students included in the treatment effectiveness study.

2). On-site observations using established instruments to document consistent application of program guidelines and procedures.

3). Comparison data collected from schools making the largest individual contributions to the Disruptive Student Program enrollment.

4). Administration of the short form of the SEI instrument rather than the full form.

Method

Participants. The participants in the student profile and treatment effectiveness research were 65 students who entered the Counseling Center during the 1983-84 school year. The students were referred from 29 secondary schools distributed throughout the school district.

Instrumentation. The instruments used to measure student self-esteem, self-concept of ability, and locus of control were, respectively, the short form of the Self-Esteem Inventory-SEI-(Coopersmith, 1975), Self-Concept of Ability Scale-SCA-(Brookover, et.al., 1967), and the Locus of Control Scale-LOC-(Nowicki and Strickland, 1972). The validity and reliability of these instruments has been confirmed and reported (Shavelson, 1976; Nowicki and Strickland, 1972). The Flanders Interaction Inventory (Flanders, 1964) and the "Teacher's Use of Time" scale (Brophy and Good, 1973) were used when conducting on-site observation of

instruction and counseling at the center.

Procedure. The procedure implemented in 1983-84 was an extension of the 1982-83 research. Students were administered the instruments upon entering and exiting the Counseling Center. The average time between administrations was six weeks. Comparison data were collected from students in the six secondary schools which had high referral rates to the Counseling Center in 1982-83. The procedure for collection of comparison data was the same as the one employed at the Counseling Center. On-site observations were conducted at random by the investigators to verify that the program was being implemented as described.

Statistical Analysis. Descriptive statistics were generated for each dimension of the student profile. Entry and exit means were computed for the SEI, SCA and LOC instruments and analyzed for directionality. Paired t-tests were applied to entry and exit means to determine if the difference between the two was statistically significant. The alpha level selected as the standard for statistical significance was .10.

Results

Student Profile. Descriptive statistics for each dimension of the student profile data are displayed in Table 1. These statistics reveal that the majority of the disruptive students were male (76.9%). Greater than fifty percent of them were white (53.8%). While 38.5 percent of them were residing with their natural parents, the remaining 61.5 percent either resided with one of their natural parents or neither. Most of the students (61.5%) were receiving free or reduced lunches. This

suggests that most of the enrollees were from families with a lower socio-economic status. The distribution of students by grade reveals that most of the students were from grades 8, 10, and 11, with the grade 10 grouping being most pronounced. The percentage of students from each of these grades was, respectively, 18.6, 29.2 and 16.9.

Insert Table 1 about here

Profile statistics for students in the comparison group are presented in Table 2. Examination of the statistics reveals that the sex distribution of students in the comparison group was approximately equal (49.9% male, 50.1% female). The distribution of students by race closely reflects the racial makeup of the student population county-wide. The majority of the students (61.2%) resided with both natural parents. Likewise, the majority of the students (78.2%) were not enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program. With the exception of grade 7, the sample included a similar number of students from each grade level.

Insert Table 2 about here

Displayed in Table 3 is the distribution of Counseling Center enrollees by the conduct code violation for which they were referred. Inspection of the table reveals that the majority of the Counseling Center enrollees (50.7%) were referred for possession of drugs. The second most frequent violation committed was possession of weapons other than firearms. When this violation category is combined with the one for firearm possession, violations

associated with weapon possession account for 15.3 percent of the Counseling Center referrals. There were nine students who were referred to the Counseling Center for the commission of uncategorized offenses. In these cases, the school principals deemed six to be 300 level violations (No.317) and three to be 200 level violations (No.218). The combined statistics for violation codes 317 and 218 reveal that 13.8 percent of the referrals to the Counseling Center were based on the discretion of school principals.

Insert Table 3 about here

Time 1 Results. Means for the initial administrations of the SEI, SCA, and LOC instruments were computed for the disruptive and nondisruptive student groups. Examination of the results revealed that the mean for disruptive students ($\bar{x}$=15.7) was slightly lower than the one obtained for nondisruptive students ($\bar{x}$=16.1). The SCA mean for disruptive students ($\bar{x}$=27.9) was also lower than the one obtained for the nondisruptive students ($\bar{x}$=28.9). Though the between-group mean differences for the SEI and SCA instruments are only marginal, the direction of those differences suggests that disruptive students have a lower self-perception than do nondisruptive students.

In regard to locus of control, the mean for disruptive students ($\bar{x}$=9.2) was larger than the one obtained from students in the comparison group ($\bar{x}$=7.6). The difference between these means is noticable and in a direction that suggests disruptive students are more externally controlled than are nondisruptive students.

Time 2 Results. Means for the second administration of the

SEI, SCA and LOC instruments were computed for the disruptive and nondisruptive student groups. The SEI means for the disruptive and nondisruptive students were, respectively, 16.6 and 16.7. The SCA means for these students were 29.0 and 28.9, respectively. Comparison of the between-group means for both instruments reveals that there was essentially no differences in self-esteem or self-concept of ability among disruptive and nondisruptive students.

The LOC means for the disruptive and nondisruptive students were, respectively, 8.2 and 7.2. These means still reflect a difference between these students in the area of locus of control. It should be noted, though, that after attending the Counseling Center for six weeks the LOC mean for disruptive students has moved closer to the mean for nondisruptive students.

Program Impact. Relative to the initial administrations of the SEI, SCA, and LOC instruments, the instrument means obtained at the second administration reflect a positive change in self-esteem, self-concept of ability, and locus of control among both groups of students. Comparison of the within-group means for each instrument reveals that students who attended the Counseling Center exhibited the greatest change between the first and second administrations. Among these students the most obvious change was in the area of self-esteem. A paired t-test applied to the entry and exit SEI means revealed the difference between the two was statistically significant ($p < .06$). When paired t-tests were applied to the entry and exit means for the SCA and LOC instruments, no statistically significant differences were detected.

Program Implementation. Numerous on-site observations were conducted by the authors to confirm that counseling and instructional activities were being conducted in accord with the Counseling Center philosophy and guidelines. The data collected with the Flanders Interaction Inventory (Flanders, 1964) revealed that counselor/teacher interactions with students were consistently of a nature that facilitated the enhancement of student self-perception and sense of personal responsibility for his or her actions. The other data collected revealed that the counselor/teachers employed managerial styles that were consistent with and, in most cases, enhanced their verbal interactions with the students.

Discussion

The goals of this study were to generate a profile of disruptive students who enroll in the Counseling Center and to determine the effectiveness of the Center's program in increasing student self-esteem, self-concept of academic ability, and internality of locus of control. The findings of the profile and treatment effectiveness research are to be used in developing programs that best suit the needs (affective and cognitive) of disruptive students entering the Counseling Center.

The profile data revealed that the majority of the disruptive students were white males referred for drug-related violations. The disruptive students also tended to reside in situations other than with both natural parents. The majority of the students received either free or reduced-price lunches, indicating a lower socio-economic status. When contrasted against the profile for

students in the comparison group, it is clear that the profile of disruptive students depicts a sample which is not characteristic of the general school population.

The dissimilarity between disruptive and nondisruptive students was also evidenced when comparing group means on the initial administrations of the SEI, SCA, and LOC instruments. The SEI and SCA means for the disruptive students were lower than those for the comparison group students, indicating a lower level of self-perception. The LOC mean was higher for the disruptive indicating greater externality of locus of control.

The results suggest that six weeks of intervention at the Counseling Center enables disruptive students to become more positive about themselves, their abilities, and more in control of their destiny. This trend is evidenced when one contrasts the between-group means for the second administration of the SEI, SCA, and LOC instruments. This comparison reveals that Counseling Center students respond in manner similar to nondisruptive students. Furthermore, the comparison of entry and exit means for students who enrolled the Counseling Center reveals a positive change for each measure of self-perception employed. These findings tend to provide evidence supporting the Counseling Center approach to addressing affective needs of disruptive students.

Summary

Though the findings of this study do not provide solutions to the problems experienced by disruptive students, they do provide information to be utilized by their counselors. The demographic statistics found common among disruptive students could

be used by counselors to facilitate identification of potentially disruptive students prior to the commission of a serious violation. The results of the study suggest that programs should be designed to identify students whose actions indicate poor self-image and externality of locus of control. These programs should then provide intervention designed to meet the affective and cognitive needs of these students. Finally, these programs must include components that address the needs of students with problems associated with drug abuse.

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Table 1

Distribution of Counseling Center Students by Demographic Variable Subcategories

1983-84

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Male	50	76.9
Female	15	23.1
Race		
White	35	53.8
Black	28	43.1
Other	2	3.1
Student Resides With		
Both Parents	25	38.5
Father Only	4	6.2
Mother Only	22	33.8
Parent and Step-Parent	5	7.7
Other	9	13.8
Lunch Status		
Free Lunch	34	52.3
Reduced Lunch	6	9.2
Neither	25	38.5
Grade		
7	8	12.3
8	12	18.6
9	9	13.8
10	19	29.2
11	11	16.9
12	6	9.2

Students came from 29 secondary schools.

Table 2

Distribution of Students in Comparison Group by Demographic Variable Subcategories

1983-84

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Male	208	49.9
Female	209	50.1
Race		
White	305	73.1
Black	97	23.3
Other	15	3.6
Student Resides With		
Both Parents	255	61.2
Father Only	8	1.9
Mother Only	77	18.5
Parent and Step-Parent	62	14.9
Other	15	3.6
Lunch Status		
Free Lunch	75	18.0
Reduced Lunch	16	3.8
Neither	326	78.2
Grade		
7	37	8.9
8	75	18.0
9	66	15.8
10	74	17.7
11	85	20.4
12	80	19.2

Students came from 6 secondary schools.

Table 3

Distribution of Counseling Center Students By Violation Code [1]

1983-84

Violation Code	Violation	Frequency	Percent of Total
301	Possession of drugs	33	50.7
310	Possession of weapons	8	12.2
317	An uncategorized offense the principal deems a Class III violation	6	9.2
218	An uncategorized offense the principal deems a Class II violation	3	4.6
303	Battery upon School Board Employee	3	4.6
314	Aggravated battery	3	4.6
305	Stealing-Larceny-Grand Theft	2	3.1
306	Burglary of School Property	2	3.1
307	Criminal mischief	2	3.1
308	Possession of firearms	2	3.1
302	Arson	1	1.5
Total		65	100.00

[1]Violation codes are presented in order of the violation frequency (high to low).